Asian Shore Crab & Brush Clawed Crab

Species Description

**Scientific name:** Hemigrapsus sanguineus (Asian shore crab) & Hemigrapsus takanoi (brush clawed crab)

**Native to:** North West Pacific coast; China (Hong Kong) Taiwan, Korea, Russia, and Japan.

**Habitat:**
- *H. sanguineus*: Range of estuarine and marine habitats, within intertidal or shallow subtidal zones.
- *H. takanoi*: Muddy sediment in the intertidal areas of mudflats, estuaries, harbours, lagoons and sheltered bays.

Small crabs with a square carapace (shell) that has three distinct ‘teeth’ on each side. These teeth are more acutely pointed in *H. sanguineus* than *H. takanoi*. Both species are variable in colour from orange-brown to greenish-black. Carapace can be up to 4.5 cm across in *H. sanguineus* and up to 2.5 cm in *H. takanoi*. Both species have distinctly white claws. Females and juvenile males can be more difficult to distinguish.

*H. sanguineus* usually has dark purple, red or brown spots on the upper side of pincers, distinctive banding on the walking legs, and large males have a fleshy bulb at the pincer base. Typically found on exposed rocky shores but also in soft sediments under the shelter of rocks or shells, artificial structures, mussel beds and oyster reefs.

*H. takanoi* has tiny dark spots on carapace, legs and claws (never on the abdomen) and adult males have a small patch of yellow-brown fuzzy growth on the claws. Tend to occupy low energy, sheltered sites and are found under boulders and other hard structures.

*H. sanguineus* and *H. takanoi* are not present in Northern Ireland, both species may compete with native crab species and are potential predators of shellfish.

As both the Asian shore crab and the Bush clawed crab are not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland, under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 it is an offence to release or allow either species to escape into the wild.

---

**Key ID Features**

*Hemigrapsus sanguineus*

- Dark purple, red or brown spots on the upper side of pincers
- Up to 45mm across
- Clear banding on the legs
- Carapace between the eyes virtually straight
- Carapace square with 3 acutely pointed teeth on each side
- Adult males have bulbous projection on claw

*Hemigrapsus takanoi*

- Up to 25mm across
- Usually has tiny dark spots on parts of body and claws (never on the abdomen)
- Square shaped carapace with 3 pointed teeth on each side
- Adult males have patch of ‘fuzzy’ fur on the claw

Both species have a finely striated suborbital stridulation organ (crest below each eye).

In *H. sanguineus* this is undivided, in *H. takanoi* this is divided into 3 unequal parts.

---

Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - [https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI](https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI), iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - [http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting](http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting)
**Similar Species**

Most crabs likely to be found on the shore have more than three teeth on either side of carapace and are not square shaped. An exception is *Pachygrapsus marmoratus* (another non-native invasive species), which can be differentiated from both species by its marbled colouration and spiny projection on the first segment of the claw.

**Marbled rock crab**

Invasive non-native (*Pachygrapsus marmoratus*)

- Spiny projection on first segment of claws
- Square shaped carapace with three spines on each side
- Carapace often marbled
- Violet brown to almost black colour carapace with lighter coloured limbs
- Very wide, prominent first segment on legs (closest to body)
- Legs have spines on final segments

**Xantho spp.**

Native

Pictured: (*Xantho pilipes*)

- Four teeth on each side of carapace
- Furrowed wrinkly carapace
- Colouration very variable, may be mottled or solid often yellowish and reddish

**Shore crab**

Native (*Carcinus maenas*)

- Three bumps between eyes
- Carapace wider at eye end (more triangular than square)
- Legs not showing clear banding
- Five teeth on each side of carapace

**Distribution**

Several specimens of *H. sanguineus* have been reported from Jersey and Guernsey since 2009 and specimens were reported from Glamorgan, Wales and Kent, England in May 2014. A specimen of *H. takanoi* was recorded on the Medway Estuary in August 2014.

**References and further reading:**


Photos from: Martin Burke, Joey, Butler, Jack Sewell and Wikicommons Duquesne.